

JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY SIX

Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

Living forgiven opens the door for us to live our lives with freedom.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERY Christian must leap over two hurdles at some point on the path of spiritual growth. First, Christians must take God at His Word that they are *fully* forgiven of their sins—past, present, and future. Second, Christians must unburden themselves from the nitpicky, religious scruples of legalistic Christians.

Both happen only by the Spirit's power. Both must happen before we can live freely and confidently in Christ. Have you taken these two steps in your Christian journey?

Many struggle with at least one. Some have incriminating memories from their non-Christian past. Such thoughts spring to mind creating guilt, shame, and humiliation. Others struggle to achieve freedom from the judging eyes of modern-day Pharisees who enslave them with rules that are impossible to keep.

Wherever you find yourself on the spiritual path, this study of Colossians 2:13–23 will help you conquer those obstacles. Pastor Chuck Swindoll wants you to live freely in Christ, assured that your sins are completely forgiven and that you are released from others' expectations that poison your spiritual growth instead of nourishing it.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Spiritual growth does not happen by human strength alone. Yes, it requires our effort, but it depends upon God. We dig, till, plant, and water, but “God makes the seed grow” (1 Corinthians 3:7). Considering that truth, begin this study in prayer, asking God to make the seed of His Word grow in your heart and produce fruit in your life. Write your prayer below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In Colossians 2:13–23, Paul continued detailing the doctrinal errors and unprofitable practices the false teachers in Colossae taught.



Observation: God Made You Alive with Christ

During observation, we walk through the garden of Scripture slowly so we can see the ornate, colorful designs and taste the spiritual food God has given us. Read *Colossians 2:13–23* with that in mind. Do so a few times. Allow its main ideas and logic to stick in your brain. Note below the fresh observations you find.



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What purposes did Jesus' death accomplish (*Colossians 2:13–15*)?

Logically, Paul reasoned from three theological truths:

- “You were dead because of your sins” (2:13)
- Christ “disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities” (2:15)
- “You have died with Christ” (2:20)

How are these theological truths connected to Paul's commands, “So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink” (2:16) and “Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial” (2:18)? Hint: the answer is in Paul's analysis of these rules in [2:17](#) and [2:19](#).

It's impossible to please everyone else. So, my goal is to please the Lord Jesus Christ, and in doing so, He teaches me to be kind, to be gracious, to be loving, to be understanding. Not to be harsh in my freedom, not to be proud of the fact that I am free but to walk in humility and not use it as a tool to take advantage of others. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Lastly, list the specifics of the false teachings in Colossae and how Paul described their futility (*Colossians 2:20–23*).

Self-made, do-it-yourself religion cannot bring you to God, improve your relationship with Him, nor even increase your spiritual power. What God wants from us, He provided for us in Christ and gives to us through His Spirit when we approach Him in faith.



Interpretation: Don't Let Anyone Condemn You

Like high-pressure salespeople, false teachers promoted their wisdom and ways as superior, but *Jesus Christ is our all in all!* His saving work makes spiritual add-ons superfluous. We need only Christ to be forgiven and to live free.

Understanding and Accepting Forgiveness

In *Colossians 2:14*, Paul explained how Christ forgave our sins. What did Paul mean when he said Jesus “canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away?”



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Understanding and Claiming Freedom

In *Colossians 2:20*, Paul claimed you are free as a Christian because Christ has “set you free from the spiritual powers of this world.” What did he mean by this statement, and how is it significant for us today?

The reason you are forgiven is because of the death of Christ on the cross. The reason you are free is because His grace has set you free. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In his commentary on Colossians, Pastor Chuck summarizes Colossians 2 by emphasizing the same subject Paul himself emphasized: Jesus Christ, our all in all.

Paul’s defense against the triple threat of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism in Colossians 2:16–23 was the same: the person and work of Jesus Christ. Against legalism, Jesus is the Liberator who forgave our sins through the Cross and freed us from the Law. Against mysticism, Jesus is the One in whom the fullness of Deity dwells bodily; He alone is the sole Mediator between God and humanity and the One through whom we have all wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual insight. Against asceticism, Jesus is the One who sprung us—through our association with His death—from the prison of worldly rules and regulations that can’t please God.¹



Correlation: Walk Humbly with Your God

Micah 6:6–8 complements Colossians 2:13–23 because of the contrast between true and fake spirituality. In the 700s BC, God raised up Micah in the village of Moresheth and called him to be a prophet. Micah prophesied with the prince of prophets, Isaiah.

Micah 6 tells of a dispute between God and His people. God presented His case against His people in *Micah 6:1–5*. Then, in *Micah 6:6–8*, a dialogue arose. In 6:6–7, Micah iterated how people accused God of burdening them with orders. God replied in 6:8 with what He actually required.



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Review *Micah 6:6–8*. What similarities of false piety do you find between *Micah 6:6–7* and *Colossians 2:13–23*?

What does the life of faith look like according to *Micah 6:8*, and how does that image correlate with Paul's teaching explored above?

God invites us to walk with Him! Never forget to be awed by the fact that the God who created the universe wants you to walk with Him in an everlasting relationship of reciprocal love and ever-increasing joy.



Application: He Has Set You Free

By this point in our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we hope the Word has deepened your assurance of Christ's forgiveness and boosted your sense of freedom. To help you on the path, Pastor Chuck provides three application principles from his study of *Colossians 2:13–23*.

1. *Be strong in God's Word.* Keep worshiping Christ, making Him Lord of your heart.
2. *Refuse and resist all other substitutes.* Keep choosing Christ, reminding yourself He's all you need and that your life is eternally secure with Him. One day, you will see Him as He is and be like Him.
3. *Don't be afraid to risk living unshackled.* Your master is Christ. More than anyone else, He cares for your good. And better than anyone else, He can achieve your good.



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Do you struggle believing Christ has forgiven *all* your sins? Hiding His Word in your heart and confessing His Word in your prayers cultivates assurance of His promise. Record below a verse or two from Colossians that will help you with assurance, and plan how you want to internalize its truth in your living and praying.

Do you need to have a conversation with someone who's imposing his or her self-made, religious rules on you? Pray for wisdom to approach the discord gently, explaining your freedom in Christ. Record a plan below and even schedule the best time to talk with that person. Remember, pray for his or her heart to soften and for grace and respect to guide your demeanor.

As a follower of Christ, you've already attained the victory. He forgave all your sins—past, present, and future—and released you from your former chains. At the resurrection, you and all who have placed their faith in Jesus will be released completely from the bonds of corruption and decay.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are my guide, my light, my comforter, my provider. Free me from being dominated by the shame and guilt of my past sins and empower me to live as You have called me to live—as it is written, “For freedom Christ has set us free.” His name be praised. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights: Insights on Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 157. Visit sts.insight.org to learn about Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.

